



909 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 909  
Sacramento CA 95814

Tuesday, July 03, 2007

Senator Alan Lowenthal  
Chair, Senate Transportation and Housing Committee  
State Capitol, Room 2032  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
Fax (916) 327-9113

**RE: SUPPORT FOR AB 57**

Dear Senator Lowenthal:

*WALKS*Sacramento, a non-profit community organization supporting walking communities in and around the Sacramento region writes in support of Assembly Bill 57 which seeks to eliminate the sunset date for the "Safe Routes to School" construction program in the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and makes statutory changes in the Streets and Highways code to conform to federal law. The Safe Routes to School program is vitally important for improving health and safety, as well as for reducing traffic congestion in California's communities.

Since its creation in 2000, the California Safe Routes to School Program (SR2S) has allocated more than \$144 million dollars to local governments to improve school area safety by installing new crosswalks, building bicycle paths and lanes, constructing sidewalks and implementing traffic calming programs in neighborhoods around schools. While this has made a very positive impact on California communities, we are aware that the program is so popular that each year Caltrans receives approximately \$130 million in qualified requests, for only about \$22 million in funding that has been available. It's critical that we continue our state support for this program.

In Sacramento, the California Safe Routes to School program has made it much safer for children to walk and bike to school. In 2006, an intersection was rebuilt near Bannon Creek Elementary School connecting high density housing with the school just two blocks away. High traffic speed at the excessively wide intersection, Millcreek Drive at West El Camino Avenues, caused parents at the high density housing to drive the short distance to and from school.

Additional infrastructure support has recently been awarded to Pacific Elementary School in Sacramento based on previous community design work.

The current and future benefits are healthier, more active children and parents, neighborhoods that know each other and higher test scores (studies find that active children do better academically).

A Caltrans report submitted to the Legislature on March 1, 2007 found that the SR2S program has been effective in achieving its goals of improving safety and increasing walking and bicycling for school children. Students whose usual route passed the improvements were more than three times likely to begin walking or biking to school than students whose usual route did not have the improvements.

By encouraging walking and cycling, the program provides opportunities for increased physical activity, which is essential to combating the increased incidences of childhood diabetes and obesity. The report also makes several recommendations for the program's success, including a recommendation to increase the total funding pool for Safe Routes to School.

WALKSacramento strongly urges your support of AB 57.

Sincerely,

Anne Geraghty  
Executive Director

Terry Preston  
Complete Streets Project Coordinator

Bannon Creek Elementary School  
Traffic Tamers, Parent Co-Leader

cc: Honorable Senator Darrell Steinberg